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WILLIAM A. MEESE.**1856—1920.**

By JOHN H. HAUBERG.

William August Meese was born at Sheboygan, Wis., Feb. 1, 1856. His parents Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Meese had come to this country from Hanover, Germany. Two years after the birth of William the family moved to Moline.

After completing the Moline Public school course Mr. Meese attended Griswold college in Davenport, Ia., for a year and then enrolled in Rock River seminary, now Mount Morris college, from which he graduated in 1876. He then took up the study of law at the University of Iowa, and was admitted to the bar of Rock Island County in 1878.

Mr. Meese was a leading citizen of his community and of the State of Illinois. He was a man of wide interests, but the subjects in which his activities were best known were in the fields of history, politics and law. He enjoyed an extensive practice at law, and in addition to his general practice, was attorney for the local Manufacturers Association; for the Peoples Savings Bank & Trust Co. of Moline; of Deere & Co., the C. M. & St. P. Railway; and for the Illinois & Michigan Canal Board. He took unusual interest in young attorneys, and a number of the prominent and successful lawyers of Rock Island County received their first coaching in the practice of their profession in Mr. Meese's office. He had great compassion for the boy inclined to be delinquent, and, in the day when "law was law, and crime was crime, whether it was taking a banana from someone's stand or wagon", and there were no probation laws, he defended scores of boys when they were up for trial, never charging a cent for his services. He was very successful in clearing the boys and restoring them to the "straight and narrow path". Parents of incorrigible boys often brought their young recreants to Mr. Meese's office, where the summons to the boy to come into

his private office, to receive a reprimand as only Mr. Meese could give, was something which could not be lightly treated, and often made lasting impressions for good.

Mr. Meese was widely recognized as a political factor. His positive, dominant personality, coupled with unusual ability; his judgment of human nature by which he picked the coming leading men of his day, and his consistent training with these leaders, brought to him an influence enjoyed by but few politicians. He was not an office seeker for himself but was content to aid in building the careers of some of Illinois' greatest statesmen.

The offices of public trust held by Mr. Meese were the following: City attorney for Moline for six years; member of the Moline Public Library Board; Member of Moline Cemetery Board, and member of the Board of Trustees of the Northern Illinois Normal School for four years.

Construction of the Moline lock, giving Moline a harbor on the Mississippi, was one of his great achievements in behalf of his home city. As an officer of the Upper Mississippi Improvement Association, Mr. Meese was in touch with affairs pertaining to river navigation, and he gave much time and energy to the encouragement of traffic on the Mississippi. The appropriation for the Moline Lock came from congress as a result of the untiring efforts of Mr. Meese. He spent much time in Washington in promoting this improvement.

Mr. Meese's hobby was history. He possessed one of the best private libraries on Illinois history to be found, as also a collection of historic relics which were donated to the Rock Island County Historical Society of which he was the founder. He was the author of "Early Rock Island" which is an authority on the early history of Rock Island County. At the time of his death he had nearly completed a history of old Fort Chartres. It is generally conceded that it was Mr. Meese's political influence which saved for posterity as a State park, the old French fortification of Fort Chartres, and it was he who, practically unaided, secured the appropriation of \$5,000.00 for the monument marking the site of Lieut. Campbell's battle in 1814, with Black Hawk, at Campbell's Island. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Illinois State Historical Society; an associate editor of the "Journal"

of the Society, and a member of the Advisory Commission of the Illinois State Historical Library.

Mr. Meese passed from this life Feb. 9, 1920. He left surviving him, his widow, who as Miss Kittie Buxton, of Marengo, Ills., married the young attorney the first year of his practice, in 1878, and was his faithful helpmeet throughout his eventful career; also four daughters, Mrs. Frank Mauk of Sterling, Ills. Mrs. Theodore Kolb of Chicago, Mrs. Benjamin S. Bell and Mrs. Maud Newton of Moline, also nine grandchildren.